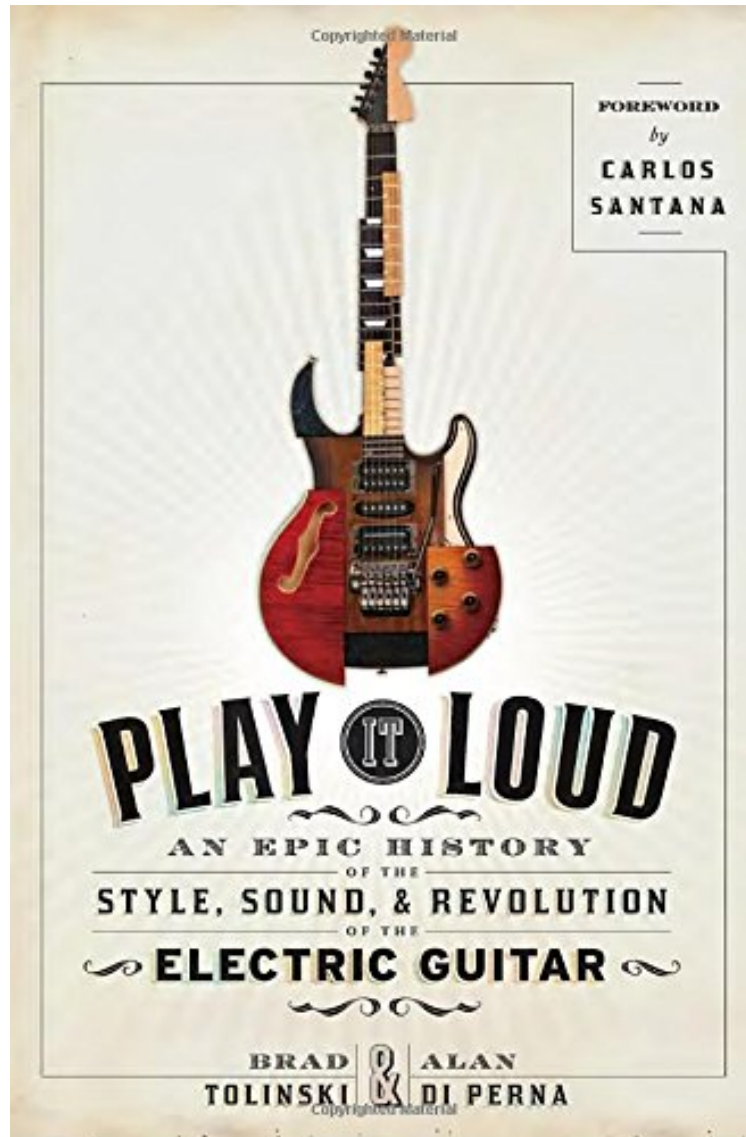


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Play It Loud: An Epic History of the Style, Sound, and Revolution of the Electric Guitar

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questions I had ...By Arthur J. Grady I'm about 2/3 of the way through and I love it. It answers so many questions I had about the history of rock (generally speaking, without going into the various genres) and of the guitars that made history. If you love music the way I do this book is great and for you. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommended. By Ferdinand Boyce As interesting and entertaining (and factual) a history of electrics as I've found in 30 years in the industry. Tolinski knows his stuff, and knows how to write a story that never bogs down with minutiae, but keeps the reader engaged. Highly recommended. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Awesome read By RL. I'm not even a guitar player but I sure do admire those who do, I loved this book, well written, very informative, it's lead me on to other books about the guitar players that it mentions throughout the 50s and up to the 80s

"Every guitar player will want to read this book twice. And even the casual music fan will find a thrilling narrative that weaves together cultural history, musical history, race, politics, business case studies, advertising, and technological discovery." Daniel Levitin, Wall Street Journal An unprecedented history of the electric guitar, its explosive impact on music and culture, and the players and builders who brought it to life For generations the electric guitar has been an international symbol of freedom, danger, rebellion, and hedonism. In *Play It Loud*, veteran music journalists Brad Tolinski and Alan di Perna bring the history of this iconic instrument to roaring life. It's a story of inventors and iconoclasts, of scam artists, prodigies, and mythologizers as varied and original as the instruments they spawned. *Play It Loud* uses twelve landmark guitar each of them artistic milestones in their own right to illustrate the conflict and passion the instruments have inspired. It introduces Leo Fender, a man who couldn't play a note but whose innovations helped transform the guitar into the explosive sound machine it is today. Some of the most significant social movements of the twentieth century are indebted to the guitar: It was an essential element in the fight for racial equality in the entertainment industry; a mirror to the rise of the teenager as social force; a linchpin of punk's sound and ethos. And today the guitar has come full circle, with contemporary titans such as Jack White of The White Stripes, Annie Clark (aka St. Vincent), and Dan Auerbach of The Black Keys bringing some of the earliest electric guitar forms back to the limelight. Featuring interviews with Les Paul, Keith Richards, Carlos Santana, Eddie Van Halen, Steve Vai, and dozens more players and creators, *Play It Loud* is the story of how a band of innovators transformed an idea into a revolution.

Every guitar player will want to read this book twice. And even the casual music fan will find a thrilling narrative that weaves together cultural history, musical history, race, politics, business case studies, advertising and technological discovery. It could serve just as easily as a text on entrepreneurship and corporate RD in the 20th century as it could a weekend vacation read. Daniel Levitin, Wall Street Journal A lively and fascinating history. You're going to want to keep your tablet or phone nearby as you read it, because you'll be absolutely compelled to find and listen to the signature songs and riffs referenced throughout the volume. The authors do a great job of introducing just enough technical information to make their points, while keeping explanations clear enough so that those of a nontechnical bent like this reviewer can follow them. Tolinski and Di Perna have produced a book that lives up to the urgent, innovative, all-encompassing spirit of its subject. Minneapolis Star-Tribune "More than the story of an iconic instrument, *Play It Loud* is a cultural history, calling up the tastes, styles and fads, the economics and even the geopolitics of 90 years of music-making. Dallas Morning News A brief tour of rock history, led by the instrument most associated with that screaming, swaggering genre. Getting to know the instruments behind the music you love is a worthwhile endeavor. Better still is getting to know the people behind those instruments, and *Play It Loud* does a good job of cracking the legend of Les Paul to reveal the mad scientists, itinerant tinkerers and passionate musicians behind the development and evolution of the electric guitar. Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star Fast, fun and informative, this book delivers lots of quick bits on your favorite hits just like a good 45 used to. Houston Press The electric guitar from the Resonator of the 1920s and Charlie Christians jazz playing in the 1930s, through Les Paul and the heyday of Jimi Hendrix and Jimmy Page unfolds in the pages of *Play It Loud*. The book... tells its story through both technical developments and the inventors and musicians who made it all happen. Salon The definitive book about the history and business of the electric guitar. Forbes.com The authors... bring freshness to chestnuts through technical nuggets aplenty.... The electric guitar changed the world, and Tolinski and di Perna impressively reveal its epic story. Kirkus (starred review) Providing a holistic overview packed with contextual insights, music journalists Tolinski and di Perna skillfully pinpoint the watershed innovations and key musicians who turned a novelty into a mainstay of popular music. An engaging introduction to a fun topic with broad appeal. Library Journal (starred review) A comprehensive history of the electric guitar, tracing its roots in George Beauchamp's experiments in search of a way to amplify a guitar's vibrations... The authors engagingly explore the importance of amplifiers on artists' sounds, particularly the Vox amps used by the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix's manipulation of feedback. Publishers Weekly *Play It Loud* is a dynamic history of the electric guitar, but more important, it's about the artists who painted the universal tones, colors, textures, and movements on the world canvas, through their fingertips, into a consciousness revolution to our hearts and minds. Brad and Alan get inside the note of the political and cultural significance of the guitar. from the foreword by Carlos

Santana, Grammy Award-winning artist and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee *Play It Loud* is a fascinating, elegantly written, page-turning account of how a musical weakness—the guitar's inherently low volume—led to the development of the instrument that transformed contemporary music and culture: the electric guitar. It's all here: the history, the science, the musicians, and of course, the stringed beauties and the sounds they helped create. An essential addition to any serious guitarist's library. Jonathan Kellerman, New York Times bestselling author of *The Murderer's Daughter*—it's all here: everything knowable now becomes known about the plugged-in ax that changed the world. A comprehensive history of the electric guitar in cultural context is something long wanted, awaited and needed. At long last, it has arrived. Billy Gibbons, ZZ Top guitarist/vocalist and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Brad Tolinski and Alan di Perna's *Play It Loud* is a marvelous survey of how the electric guitar has rocked its way into the hearts and minds of millions of music lovers. This is a rich trove of unforgettable anecdotes and vignettes. Highly recommended! Douglas Brinkley, New York Times bestselling author of *Rightful Heritage*—About the Author BRAD TOLINSKI was the editor-in-chief of *Guitar World*, the world's bestselling magazine for musicians, for twenty-five years. He is the author of *Light Shade: Conversations with Jimmy Page*. ALAN DI PERNA is a longtime contributor to *Guitar World* and *Guitar Aficionado* and has written for *Rolling Stone*, *Creem*, *Billboard*, *Guitar Player*, and other leading music publications. He is the author of *Guitar Masters: Intimate Portraits*. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

chapter 1 Brother Musician, Listen to a Miracle! For as long as there have been guitars, there have been young guitar players who have forsaken their rural hometowns for the bright lights of the big city, hoping that their six-string mastery will win them fame and fortune. This epic quest—a kind of latter-day pilgrimage—is no doubt what impelled George Delmetia Beauchamp to leave rural Texas and set himself up in Hollywood in the early years of the 1920s. Young Beauchamp (pronounced Bee-chum) was in his mid-twenties at the time. And while he did all right for himself as a guitarist in the L.A. area, he is not at all remembered today among the guitar-playing immortals. We don't even have any recordings to give us an idea of what he sounded like. Outside of a small circle of guitar obsessives, in fact, Beauchamp isn't even remembered for his most outstanding achievement—his pivotal role in the development of the electric guitar. His name may not resound through the decades like those of Les Paul, Leo Fender, or Charlie Christian, but the electric guitar may never have come into being without George Beauchamp. He not only invented the first fully functional guitar pickup, he also put it to work in his pioneering design for the world's first successful, commercially produced electric guitar. The pickup can be regarded as the most important part of any electric guitar. It's what converts the guitar strings' vibrations into electrical signals that can be amplified. A pickup to an electric guitar is what wheels are to a car. Without that, you're going nowhere. Beauchamp's friend and business partner Adolph Rickenbacker once described him as a young Texas boy [who] got too fat to pick cotton. That wasn't entirely kind or accurate. Surviving photographs of Beauchamp show him to be a dapper (and rather trim) gentleman—a professional entertainer and entrepreneur with hair neatly slicked back and a sporty predilection for bow ties. But he had indeed been born in Texas, on March 18, 1899, one of nine children brought into this world by Saybird and Fanny Beauchamp. George took violin lessons as a child but eventually switched to the guitar. When he grew to manhood and made his move to Los Angeles, he was accompanied by his brother Alton, also a guitar player. Not that the brothers Beauchamp immediately had all Hollywood at their feet. Like most musicians, they needed a day gig at first, so they found work as house painters. It must have been an incredibly exciting time for a young man to land in a city like L.A. The film business had recently relocated there from New York; Hollywood had embarked on what would be known as its golden age. It was also well on the way toward acquiring a somewhat deserved reputation as a city of sin, Hollywood Babylon. Real estate was cheap and there was plenty of easy money around. People wanted to be entertained. It was a good place to make your mark as a musician. George Beauchamp seems to have had little trouble fitting into Roaring Twenties Los Angeles. He was by all accounts affable and well-liked, not at all averse to the occasional illicit drink, Prohibition being in effect at this time. George and Alton got work in vaudeville, the theatrical variety entertainment genre still going strong in the twenties. They secured booking representation by the William Morris Agency, then as now a major player in the entertainment world. As a guitar duo, the siblings performed Hawaiian music under the name Grasshopper and George. A promotional photo shows them with guitars in hand, wearing matching shirts and trousers, shoes immaculately polished, looking sharp in bow ties and with Hawaiian leis around their necks. Hawaiian-style steel guitar was George's specialty. In this mode of playing, an acoustic guitar is held horizontally on the guitarist's lap, and notes are formed by sliding a metal bar, known as a steel, across the strings. The style had originated in the 1880s, when Hawaiian guitarist Joseph Kekuku reportedly held the side of a metal spike gently against the strings of his guitar, producing a steely glissando (gliding) tonality, which quickly became an aural signifier of the Hawaiian Islands. To facilitate playing, the guitar would be tuned to an open chord (such that strumming without the steel would produce, say, a G major chord). In order to achieve some open tunings, the player must slacken, or reduce tension, on the strings by means of the guitar's tuning keys. For this reason the style is also called slack key. To accompany his brother, Alton Beauchamp played Spanish style guitar. This is the mode of playing most common today, in which the instrument is held vertically against the player's waist or torso and notes are formed by pressing the fingers of the left hand against the guitar's fingerboard (also called the fretboard). For some performances, George and Alton Beauchamp were joined by a third musician, Slim Harper (sometimes Hooper), on

another popular Hawaiian instrument, the ukulele. On such occasions they were billed as the Boys from Dixie. Some hundred years down the road, its difficult to appreciate the immense popularity of Hawaiian music in the early decades of the twentieth century. Popular fascination with Hawaiian culture or at least a romanticized version thereof was first sparked by Broadway shows such as 1912s *Birds of Paradise*, and by the Hawaiian Pavilion at the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. Hit songs including a 1917 recording of *My Waikiki Mermaid*, written by Sonny Cunha, and 1925s *Ukulele Lady* by Gus Kahn and Richard Whiting popularized a style known as *hapa haole* (literally half white), a Hawaiian song form with English lyrics. In the absence of recordings, we can only suppose that this is the musical style that the Beauchamp brothers played. The nascent Hollywood film industry made its own contribution to the Hawaiian craze, with features like 1923s *The White Flower* and 1927s *Hula*. The latter starred movie idol and flapper icon Clara Bow, who dances in a grass skirt in one provocative scene. These idealized depictions of Hawaii in song and on the silver screen suggested a carefree, uninhibited way of life underneath the swaying palms, which played very well in the permissive Jazz Age. Guitars had been integral to Hawaiian music ever since the first European settlers arrived there in the eighteenth century. Among them were Portuguese sailors who brought not only their guitars but also their *cavaquinhos*, a stringed instrument that the Hawaiians renamed the ukulele. With the advent of the steel guitar style in the nineteenth century, a uniquely Hawaiian guitar sensibility had taken shape and been drafted wholesale into the musical culture of 1920s America and Europe. As a result, a great deal of early electric guitar innovation was focused on the Hawaiian guitar. An accomplished guitarist, George Beauchamp could play both Hawaiian and Spanish style. And in pursuing his art, he faced the dilemma shared by many guitarists of the 1920s the need for greater volume. In a sense, the quest for increased amplitude had been part of the guitars evolution ever since the instrument made its nineteenth-century journey out of the parlors and drawing rooms, where it was most frequently played as a polite accomplishment of well-bred young ladies, and into the dance halls and speakeasies of the Roaring Twenties. In this period, the guitar eclipsed the banjo as the fretted string instrument of choice in jazz and dance bands. With more strings than a banjo, it was capable of more jazzy, chordal sophistication. But no matter how hard you strummed a guitar, it just couldnt achieve the same volume as a banjo. And so it was that George Beauchamp visited the shop of John Dopyera, a European-born instrument maker, sometime around 1926 and issued him a challenge: Make this thing louder. Together, they devised the idea of an acoustic resonator guitar. To understand how it works, you first have to consider the basic mechanics of the guitar. A guitars strings are held in position by two small pieces of hardware: one at the lower part of the instruments body and another at its head. The one near the head is called the nut and the one on the lower body is called the bridge. As the part of the guitar that absorbs much of the vibration of the strings, the bridge was often the focus of attempts to make the instrument louder. Beauchamp and Dopyeras acoustic resonator guitar, then, would be an instrument with one or more resonating cones made of spun aluminum and attached to the bridge. By affixing these cones to the bridge, the men attempted to amplify those vibrations the way an acoustic horn was used to amplify the sound of a phonograph. While they are acoustic instruments, the resonator guitars that Beauchamp and Dopyera devised are important precursors of the electric guitar. Beauchamps association with Dopyera, moreover, would allow Beauchamp to acquire both the guitar-building skills and a team of collaborators that would make possible his pioneering work in the years to come. Six years Beauchamps senior, John Dopyera along with his brothers Rudy, Emil, Robert, and Louis were part of the great wave of European immigrants, some ten million strong, who came to the United States at the close of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth. By 1924 more than thirteen million people living in the United States were foreign-born. Many of these immigrants would make significant contributions to American culture and industry including the guitar business, as well see. The five Dopyera brothers, along with five more of their siblings, had emigrated from Slovakia to the United States early in the century. A skilled cabinetmaker and machinist, John had patented several inventions, including a machine for making picture frames. But he had been trained as a violin maker by his father back in Slovakia, and he eventually returned to that pursuit in the New World. Working out of a shop in Los Angeles, he built and repaired violins, also collaborating with his brother Rudy on designing and building banjos. Like many banjo makers at the time, the Dopyeras were aware of the guitars encroachment on their market, and they were interested in turning their hand to guitar building. So Johns meeting with George Beauchamp was fortuitous. Dopyera had the design and manufacturing skills; Beauchamp knew guitars intimately. Such partnerships, between players and makers, would prove key components in the electric guitars evolution. Beauchamp and Dopyeras first attempt at a resonator guitar was a hollow-bodied instrument with three spun cones attached to the bridge a tri-cone. It was a brilliant instrument, and one that would go on to have a role not only in Hawaiian music but also in blues and other pop genres. But it might not have gone anywhere had Beauchamp not leveraged his connections, both in the music world and within his own family. He placed a prototype resonator guitar in the hands of popular Hawaiian guitarist Sol Hoopii and then brought Hoopii's trio to play at a party hosted by Beauchamps wild and wealthy playboy cousin-in-law, Ted E. Kleinmeyer. Given Kleinmeyers scapegrace reputation, the party was most likely a wild one. He's one of those figures who personify the excess of the Roaring Twenties, a time when the economy was booming and society was throwing off the moral constraints of the nineteenth century. The son of a well-heeled rancher with interests in oil and the stock market, Kleinmeyer inherited some \$600,000 (the equivalent of over \$8 million today) upon turning

twenty-one, following the death of his father, Earnest. This was one-third of the total legacy, the balance to be issued upon his thirtieth birthday. The younger Kleinmeyer immediately set to work squandering the first installment of his inheritance, partying at a rate that put in some doubt the likelihood that he'd ever reach thirty. He was known to drive around L.A. roaring drunk in a Lincoln sedan equipped with a police siren that he wasn't shy about setting off. So when the Sol Hoopii Trio, and the new resonator acoustic guitar they were showcasing, made a big hit at Teddys party, it reflected well on cousin George. Kleinmeyer agreed to fund Beauchamp and Dopyeras new venture with a reported loan of \$12,500, a sum more than adequate to launch a guitar manufacturing company at the time. The National String Instrument Corporation was certified by the State of California on January 26, 1928, with Ted E. Kleinmeyer as president. George Beauchamp became the companys general manager, John Dopyera was named factory superintendent, and Dopyeras cousin Paul Barth was designated assistant factory superintendent. Barth had skill in guitar making and would soon become one of Beauchamps key design collaborators. Beauchamp was paid \$55 per week, Dopyera received \$50, and Barth \$48. All was fine at first. Well-capitalized, National came out with four Tricone resonator guitar models, Styles 1 through 4, each one more ornate and higher-priced than its predecessor in the product line. The guitars featured bodies made of cast aluminum, something brand new in the annals of guitar design. They were consummately flashy instruments for an extravagantly stylish time period, their gleaming aluminum surfaces adorned with slashing, angular sound holes and intricately etched curvilinear designs in floral and Hawaiian motifs. But it wasn't only about looks. The metal body, combined with the resonating cones, produced a distinctive, almost hornlike tone that could effectively cut through an ensemble of instruments. Fabrication of the guitars cast-aluminum bodies was outsourced to a machinist named Adolph Rickenbacker (or Rickenbacher, as it was spelled at the time). Like the Dopyeras, he had been part of the great late-nineteenth/early-twentieth-century wave of migration from Europe. Born Adolf Adam Rigggenbacher in Basel, Switzerland, on April 1, 1887, he immigrated to New York with his family in 1891, while he was still quite young. From there he made his way to Ohio, where he married into money his wife, Charlotte, being an heiress to the Standard Oil fortune. The couple lived in Illinois for a while, but in 1918 moved to California, where Adolph worked as an engineer/machinist for the Hotpoint oven company. There, he perfected an injection-molding process used to fashion the Bakelite knobs used on the companys products this at a time when synthetic plastics such as Bakelite were an exciting new technology and profit center. But by the early 1920s, Rickenbacker had established his own machine shop, a tool-and-die business at 6701 South Western Avenue in Los Angeles, with Charlotte on the staff as a stenographer. Rickenbacker assimilated himself into the culture of his new home. He was very successful at it, according to John Hall, the current chairman and CEO of the Rickenbacker guitar company. Hall was just a young boy when he knew Adolph Rickenbacker, who was by then a man of some years. But Rickenbacker left a vivid impression on the young Hall: Adolph was a real character. He had a story for everything... He was in fact sort of like a Bakersfield [California] cowboy. He always wore a cowboy hat. And he was an inveterate tinkerer. He was always trying to figure out a way to make something better, or another way to make something more efficient.